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## **Between Patton and Montgomery: Robert Henriques and Operation Husky**

### **Introduction**

This article seeks to examine one individual who played an important yet informal role as a British liaison officer to the U.S. Seventh Army during the Sicilian campaign of 10 July to 17 August 1943.<sup>1</sup> Robert David Quixano Henriques (1905-1967) was a well-known literary figure of the mid-twentieth century<sup>2</sup>. He published a number of successful novels and biographies over his literary career although he is now somewhat obscure figure in comparison some of his contemporaries, such as Evelyn Waugh, today.<sup>3</sup> It is due to his particular position, as Lieutenant General George S. Patton's unofficial British liaison officer, combined with his literary eye as a writer and his surviving, although fragmentary, papers, which gives a glimpse into some of the inner workings of the Seventh Army and its relations with the British Eighth Army during Operation Husky from an unusual and revealing perspective.<sup>4</sup>

Operation Husky was not only the largest amphibious assault ever attempted but also represented the main effort of the Anglo-American Alliance in the summer of 1943. It marked the first assault on an Axis defended shore on the mainland of occupied Europe. Overall, Allied operations on the island were marked with success: the amphibious assaults conducted on the south-eastern corner of the island on 10 July 1943 were successful and met with only limited Axis resistance. After a fierce series of Axis counter-attacks, the two Allied armies began their campaign to reduce the island and, after thirty eight days of heavy fighting, Sicily had been captured. Yet although the campaign was broadly successful, it also generated a series of controversies over the course and conduct of the campaign, most notably in the generation of friction and rivalry between the two Allied Army commanders, Generals Patton and Montgomery.<sup>5</sup>

While Robert Henriques had no command authority during the campaign, he did, through his largely unofficial role, have access to most of the main Allied commanders. In

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<sup>1</sup> The United States Seventh Army will henceforth be referred to as the Seventh Army.

<sup>2</sup> Most of the biographical information concerning Henriques is taken from Robert Henriques, *From a Biography of Myself*, London: Secker & Warburg, 1969; and his surviving papers held at the University of Reading, Special Collections, Museum of English Rural Life, Reading, U.K, hereafter URSC.

<sup>3</sup> Henriques was a castaway on 'Desert Island Discs' in 1954, see <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p009yb58>.

<sup>4</sup> Operation Husky was the codename given to the Allied amphibious assault on the island of Sicily.

<sup>5</sup> Lieutenant General George S. Patton was the commander of the U.S. Seventh Army while General Sir Bernard L. Montgomery was the commander of the British Eighth Army.

fact, Henriques experience as a British liaison officer working with the Americans had begun before Operation Torch. He later summarised his service during the period:

In August 1942 I was lent by COHQ to General Patton, in order to help him plan the Moroccan assaults and I went with him to Casablanca, and back to him again in North Africa to help plan the Sicilian assaults, and I landed in Sicily with Lucian Truscott and was then commandeered by Patton to be his chief Liaison Officer with Montgomery throughout that campaign. Often I wore American uniform and was given American rank, and on one occasion, even an American command!<sup>6</sup>

In this role, Henriques gained ‘a different view of the war’ and had crucial access to some of the key American and British commanders during the Sicilian campaign.<sup>7</sup> He also pointed out that:

Without boasting, or maybe I am, I think I can honestly say that there is nobody alive with such a comprehensive knowledge of HUSKY at all stages. I was intimately involved with Patton, Montgomery and Alexander, Bradley and Oliver Leese, and the Commander of the Canadian Division [Major General Guy Simonds].<sup>8</sup>

Henriques considered his involvement in Operation Husky to be the ‘the two or three most productive months of his whole life’.<sup>9</sup> During the campaign and in his capacity as an unofficial liaison officer, he helped develop liaison and communication between the Seventh and Eighth Armies but he also assisted Seventh Army in numerous other respects, most notably in intelligence and special operations. While Henriques did publish semi-biographical accounts of his wartime experiences in his novels, *No Arms, No Armour*, *Captain Smith and Company*, *The Journey Home*, *Red Over Green* and *The Commander*, the source material for these novels was all derived from his service as a Commando in the early years of the war.<sup>10</sup> He left a highly entertaining account of his experiences in Operation Torch published posthumously in *From a Biography of Myself*, but, unfortunately, never published a similar account of his experiences during the Sicilian campaign.<sup>11</sup> It is certain that he intended to, as he once stated that: ‘I cannot possibly attempt to give you the Sicilian

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<sup>6</sup> Henriques to Liddell Hart, 23 November 1965, Box 113, Henriques papers, URSC. ‘COHQ’ refers to Combined Operations Headquarters which was a department of the War Office established in 1940 to develop the techniques necessary to conduct amphibious raids and assaults on occupied Europe.

<sup>7</sup> Henriques to Liddell Hart, 23 November 1965, URSC.

<sup>8</sup> Henriques to Hugh Pond, 27 March 1962, Box 113, Henriques papers, URSC. Major General Omar Bradley was the commander of U.S. II Corps during the campaign; Major General Oliver Leese was the commander of British XXX Corps and Major General Guy Simonds was the commander of 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Division.

<sup>9</sup> Henriques, *From a Biography*, p.158.

<sup>10</sup> Robert Henriques, *No Arms, No Armour*, London: Nicholson & Watson, 1939; *Captain Smith and Company*, London: William Heinemann, 1943; *The Journey Home*, London: William Heinemann, 1944; *Red over Green*, London: Viking Press, 1956; *The Commander: An Autobiographical Novel of 1940-41*, London: Secker & Warburg, 1967.

<sup>11</sup> Henriques, *From a Biography*, pp.53-158.

story in a letter. In my own autobiography it occupies about 60 thousand words, but this is unrevised and unreadable at present'.<sup>12</sup> Sadly, this unrevised manuscript of his 'Sicilian story' no longer appears to exist as even his unedited reflections would have provided greater detail on his activities than survives today.<sup>13</sup> Henriques role and importance during the campaign is mentioned in a number of key works concerning Operation Husky. General Lucian K. Truscott's memoir *Command Missions* mentions Henriques on a number of occasions, while he is also noted in *The Patton Papers*, Hugh Pond's *Sicily*, and quoted in Carlo D'Este's *Bitter Victory*.<sup>14</sup> Yet we gain only a partial view of Henriques activities from these accounts. Although Henriques manuscript of his Sicilian activities no longer survives, his other papers and materials from his collection remain significant and highlight his participation in key events during the campaign.<sup>15</sup> This article suggests that Henriques had a more important role than has been hitherto identified, that the breakdown in communications between the Allies, and indeed between formations, in Sicily was a greater factor than is generally acknowledged, and that liaison, or rather the lack of it, played an important part in the misunderstanding and friction between Allied commanders during the campaign.

### **Robert Henriques**

Robert Henriques had developed a considerable fund of military experience and knowledge by 1943. Born into a notable Anglo-Jewish family, Henriques was educated at Rugby School and New College Oxford. He had then joined the Royal Artillery as an officer and served for seven years before being invalided out.<sup>16</sup> He continued to serve in the Territorial Army and took a Staff College correspondence course for reserve officers in 1939. His first novel, *No Arms, No Armour*, was published in November 1939, and won the All-Nations Prize Novels competition in 1940. There seems little doubt that had the war not intervened, Henriques would have developed his career as a writer and, even with numerous interruptions, he continued to write during his war service.<sup>17</sup> When war broke out, he returned to the army and served in a number of Royal Artillery posts before volunteering for

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<sup>12</sup> Henriques, *From a Biography*, pp.53-158.

<sup>13</sup> It is not to be found in the Henriques papers, URSC.

<sup>14</sup> Martin Blumenson, *The Patton Papers*, Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1972, p.??? Hugh Pond, *Sicily*, London: William Kimber, 1962, pp.205-206; Carlo D'Este, *Bitter Victory: The Battle for Sicily July-August 1943*, London: HarperCollins, 1989, p.426. D'Este identifies Henriques as a Major when he held the wartime rank of Colonel by July 1943.

<sup>15</sup> Henriques did leave a manuscript contemporaneous diary and a number of detailed letters to correspondents about his time on Sicily, see Henriques papers, URSC.

<sup>16</sup> Henriques, *From a Biography*, p.ix.

<sup>17</sup> Henriques, *From a Biography*, p.ix.

service with the commandos.<sup>18</sup> He raised and commanded a Commando Troop before being appointed as a staff officer in the 1<sup>st</sup> Special Service Brigade. By November 1941 he had become the Brigade Major and planned numerous Commando operations including the Vaagso raid. Henriques was then transferred to Combined Operations Headquarters where, as an experienced commando officer, he became a key member of the planning staff. It was in this capacity, and by dint of his now considerable expertise in amphibious operations, that he was sent to Washington to assist the American Task Force in its planning for Operation Torch.<sup>19</sup> Henriques was nominated for this role by Colonel Charles Haydon, Vice-Chief of Combined Operations, but Commodore Lord Louis Mountbatten, the Chief of Combined Operations, was 'apprehensive' about this because he thought that Henriques 'would be irritated by and intolerant and highly critical of American ignorance in these matters and thereby cause offence and do more harm than good'.<sup>20</sup> In the event, Henriques worked well with the Americans and the posting marked 'the beginning of his great friendship and admiration for General George Patton'.<sup>21</sup> He then served as Patton's chief British liaison officer during Operation Torch and was awarded the Silver Star for his service. Henriques' report on Operation Torch for Combined Operation Headquarters reached the British Chiefs of Staff and Churchill himself in January 1943. Patton then requested that Henriques be allowed to assist him in the planning for the next major operation in the Mediterranean: Operation Husky, the invasion of Sicily. Henriques returned to Algeria to serve with Patton but Major General Lucian K. Truscott then asked Patton if he would 'loan' Henriques to his JOSS Force planning team<sup>22</sup>. Truscott, the commanding general of the 3<sup>rd</sup> US Infantry Division, had first met Henriques in London in April 1942 when he had established the American Ranger force. Truscott clearly valued Henriques knowledge, experience and friendship. Henriques duly joined the JOSS planning team and spent the early part of June 1943 with them at Bizerta in Tunisia. He also spent ten days at Seventh Army Headquarters, before visiting U.S. II Corps Headquarters, and discussing the plans for 1<sup>st</sup> and 45<sup>th</sup> U.S. Infantry Divisions. He spent the rest of the month at JOSS Force and frequently visited 15<sup>th</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Henriques, *From a Biography*, p.ix.

<sup>19</sup> Henriques, *From a Biography*, p.x.

<sup>20</sup> 'Meego to Me', Box 102, Henriques papers, URSC.

<sup>21</sup> 'Meego to Me', URSC.

<sup>22</sup> JOSS was the codename given to the landing area at Licata in Sicily. JOSS Force was the naval and amphibious task force containing the 3<sup>rd</sup> US Infantry Division which was to mount the assault there. See Lucian K Truscott, *Command Missions*, Novato CA, Presidio Press, 1990, p.195.

Army Group Headquarters.<sup>23</sup> Truscott later paid Henriques a handsome tribute for his contribution to the planning for Operation Husky:

This brilliant and accomplished officer was thoroughly conversant with British shore-to-shore techniques, had wide experience in operational planning, and actual experience in assault operations from his service with British Commandos. His knowledge, enthusiasm, and cooperative spirit were invaluable to me and to the American officers with whom he worked in all of our JOSS planning.<sup>24</sup>

Henriques experience in planning and the practicalities of amphibious landings were clearly appreciated by Truscott and Patton. Henriques observed the JOSS Force rehearsal and embarked on the Headquarters Ship *USS Biscayne* for the invasion itself. Henriques thus had a detailed and intimate knowledge of the American dimension to Husky from its planning to execution.

### **Henriques on Sicily**

When the Allied forces landed on Sicily on 10 July 1943 the planning phase of the operation was most definitely over; the campaign had begun. Henriques landed on Yellow Beach at Licata on the morning of the invasion.<sup>25</sup> His role also changed; wearing American uniform, he acted as Truscott's Head of Intelligence, G.2., for the first few days of the campaign.<sup>26</sup> Truscott's 3<sup>rd</sup> U.S. Infantry Division was on the left flank of the Seventh Army and Henriques witnessed its rapid drive inland. On 11 July he accompanied Brigadier General William E. Eagles, the Assistant Commanding General, on the advance through Palma di Montichera and the next day saw elements of the 15<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment advance from Campobello.<sup>27</sup> Truscott's division was able to make a very rapid advance into the interior of Sicily against very little opposition. However, Axis forces had mounted a powerful counter-attack against the American forces around Gela with the intention of driving them into the sea. The American units, supported by heavy naval gun fire from the naval task forces, resisted these attacks and with their failure, the Axis forces had little option but to retreat.<sup>28</sup> With the Italian Livorno and German Herman Goering Divisions repulsed around Gela, and

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<sup>23</sup> 'Planning and Assault Phases of the Sicilian Campaign'. Report by Lt-Col. Henriques, Assistant Chief Military Planners, C.O.H.Q., Operation Husky Part XI, DEFE2/295, TNA. 15<sup>th</sup> Army Group Headquarters was commanded by General Sir Harold Alexander. Alexander's headquarters was named 18<sup>th</sup> Army Group during the Tunisian campaign and had command responsibility for the U.S. II Corps and British First and Eighth Armies. The headquarters was re-named 15<sup>th</sup> Army Group and had overall command of U.S. Seventh Army and British Eighth Army during Husky.

<sup>24</sup> Truscott, *Command Missions*, p.199.

<sup>25</sup> 'Sicilian Campaign', TNA.

<sup>26</sup> Henriques to Pond, URSC.

<sup>27</sup> 'Sicilian Campaign', TNA.

<sup>28</sup> Albert N. Garland and Howard McGaw Smyth, *Sicily and the Surrender of Italy*, Washington D.C.: Office of the Chief of Military History, Department of the Army, 1965, pp.168-172.

the mobile units of 15<sup>th</sup> Panzer Division transiting from the far west of Sicily, there were few Axis forces to hold the interior of Sicily.<sup>29</sup> It was realised quickly by General Alfredo Guzzoni, the Axis commander on the island, and Field Marshal Albert Kesselring, OB Sud, that their forces were not strong enough to prevent the Allied occupation of the island.<sup>30</sup> On the afternoon of 12 July, Henriques:

found myself a passenger in Truscott's jeep while he ('with complete disregard for the rules of the game') personally led an armoured attack which captured Canicatti against considerable resistance. Already a week ahead of the plan, Truscott then sent patrols forward and northward another 15 miles to the vital communications centre of Caltanissetta which was reported clear of enemy troops.<sup>31</sup>

Canicatti, with its important road junctions, had been a D+5 objective for Truscott's division but had fallen on the evening of D+2. Truscott and Henriques were aware that there were very few Axis forces in front of them and that an opportunity to strike north beckoned.

Henriques wrote later that:

After watching this attack and entering CANICATTI with General Truscott immediately after its capture, I was able that evening to see the majority of the forward elements along the whole of the JOSS Force front, a perimeter of nearly 50 miles; and I am certain that if it had only been possible to land a single Regimental Combat team at LICATA, to constitute a central reserve, nothing could have prevented our capture of CALTANISSETTA and ENNA as well, within the next two or three days. By noon on D + 3, the situation on this front was not only secure, but three battalions of tanks and two of Armoured Infantry had been withdrawn into general reserve at CAMPOBELLO; ample artillery was deployed in forward positions; the supply situation was more than satisfactory; efficient line communications had been established; and the Regiments of 3<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Division were in a fit state for further advances by that evening.<sup>32</sup>

While Canicatti was important, the possession of Caltanissetta and Enna were vital. Almost all of the main routes through the interior of the island converged on these two towns. Enna, in particular, was viewed as the 'hub of the highway system of the island'.<sup>33</sup> Occupation of these important nodal centres might have severed the Axis lines of communication and doomed the Axis defence to defeat in detail. However, Truscott knew that he could not advance further without authority and his communications with Seventh Army Headquarters had entirely failed.<sup>34</sup> It may be that the opportunity that both Truscott and Henriques scented

<sup>29</sup> Garland and Smyth, *Sicily*, pp.168-172.

<sup>30</sup> Garland and Smyth, *Sicily*, pp.211-217.

<sup>31</sup> Henriques to Editor, *The Sunday Times*, 15 November 1962, Box 115, Henriques MSS.

<sup>32</sup> 'Sicilian Campaign', TNA.

<sup>33</sup> G W L Nicholson, *The Canadians in Italy, 1943-1945*, Volume II, Ottawa: Edmond Cloutier, 1956, p.86.

<sup>34</sup> Henriques to Editor, URSC

was a fleeting one and even that it was more apparent than real. Truscott's main mission was to act as the flank guard of the Seventh Army, most of whose units had not been able to make such a rapid advance. 15<sup>th</sup> Panzer Division, which had been ordered to move from western Sicily on 10 July, then shifted its units into the hills south of Caltanissetta. Truscott may have found his route north barred by these troops.<sup>35</sup> However, it does appear that a rapid drive north by 3<sup>rd</sup> U.S. Division may well have disrupted the Axis defence and caused them significant difficulties as they began to withdraw towards their *Haufkampflinie* (main line of resistance) which ran across the centre of the island. Henriques stated in his report on Sicily that: 'History may well show that the German plans might have been frustrated if the advance of JOSS Force, on the extreme left, could have been allowed to continue Northwards after D + 3'.<sup>36</sup> Truscott certainly shared these views but it is impossible to speculate further. What can be said with certainty is that Truscott's force had demonstrated an ability to push forwards much farther and faster than anyone expected. Having dealt with the Axis counter-attack, Seventh Army was in a position to exploit the situation to the Allies advantage.

Having witnessed this considerable and unexpected success, Henriques was in Canicatti when he was knocked unconscious and slightly wounded by an explosion.<sup>37</sup> When he woke up, Henriques found himself in a Field Hospital near the beach at Licata. He simply left the tent and wandered out to find his jeep and driver who had just brought him there. In an 'extraordinary coincidence' his driver was 'talking to a dispatch rider who had stopped to enquire where he could hope to find me. He carried a message from General Patton ordering me to report to US 7<sup>th</sup> Army Headquarters forthwith'.<sup>38</sup> Without troubling to get himself cleaned up, Henriques jumped into the jeep and drove off to Patton's Headquarters at Gela. Henriques had, after all, only been 'loaned' to Truscott for the planning phases of Husky. Patton had realised that he needed Henriques at Seventh Army Headquarters.

### **Liaison and the Sicilian Campaign**

The problem facing Patton and, indeed, all of the Allied commanders was that Allied arrangements for co-ordination, co-operation and liaison between the two Allied armies were patchy at best and non-existent at worst. It might be supposed that General Harold Alexander's 15<sup>th</sup> Army Group would function as the co-ordinating headquarters for the

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<sup>35</sup> Nicholson, *Canadians*, p.91.

<sup>36</sup> 'Sicilian Campaign', TNA.

<sup>37</sup> Henriques to Editor, URSC.

<sup>38</sup> Henriques to Editor, URSC.



campaign. However, while this might have worked in theory, it did not function in practice at the start of the campaign.

There had been considerable controversy over the plan for Operation Husky and eventually, Montgomery's preferred plan had been adopted. However, there had been no discussion or agreement on how the campaign would develop once the forces were ashore. In a post war interview, Alexander admitted that he: 'did not set up any plan for the exploitation phase. While he felt that the 8<sup>th</sup> Army would initially be making the main effort he reserved for later decision what the role of each army would be after the initial objectives and firm bridgehead line had been established across the island'.<sup>39</sup> While Alexander's reluctance to commit to a firm plan for exploitation before the invasion took place and actual conditions were realised can be understood, it is less understandable why Alexander did not establish a forward headquarters on the island early in the campaign. Alexander's Headquarters moved from Algiers to Malta but did not establish itself on the island of Sicily, at Cassibile south of Syracuse, until late July. While Alexander did receive reports from both armies about their progress, neither he nor his headquarters were really in touch with the fast moving events of the campaign in the first few days. This meant, in effect, that there was no higher headquarters to co-ordinate the operations of both Seventh and Eighth Armies on the island. No practical arrangements were made to fill the void left by the absence of a 15<sup>th</sup> Army Group Headquarters.

It is also clear that neither the Eighth Army commander nor staff prioritised liaison or communication with the Seventh Army. As Major General Ronald Penney, Alexander's chief signals officer noted, there was a 'complete neglect of lateral links' between Eighth and Seventh Army.<sup>40</sup> Eighth Army had developed a self-sufficient, almost isolationist, attitude during its North African experience. For over two years, Eighth Army had been the *only* Allied Army in North Africa and this meant that there had been little or no need for an emphasis on co-operation and liaison. Even during the Tunisian campaign, Eighth Army had fought most of its battles in western Libya and eastern Tunisia, far from the British First Army and U.S. II Corps. The first meetings between even the British First and Eighth Armies in Tunisia had not been encouraging. Soldiers of the Eighth Army tended to display an arrogant dismissive attitude towards their First Army brethren who were not considered 'proper' desert soldiers. These attitudes of confidence, self-sufficiency and not to say

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<sup>39</sup> Alexander Interview, Box 2, Sidney Matthews Papers, USAMHI.

<sup>40</sup> Penney Diary, 19 July 1943, PENNEY 3/2, Ronald Penney Papers, Liddle Hart Centre for Military Archives, King's College London.

arrogance towards any other Allied formation –whether British or American - died hard in the Eighth Army.<sup>41</sup> Sicily then, was in many respects, the first campaign in which Eighth Army had to properly co-operate and liaise with another formation equal in scale, scope and command span.

Arrangements for liaison were also hampered by the fact that Allied headquarters had been scattered across the Mediterranean before the operation. Patton's headquarters had been in Casablanca, Morocco; Eisenhower's was in Algiers, while Eighth Army's planning headquarters was in Cairo. All three of main army commanders, Patton, Alexander and Montgomery had been 'absentee' commanders, involved in the conduct of the Tunisian campaign until May 1943. It is perhaps small wonder given these circumstances that the need for proper liaison and co-ordination had been overlooked.

In fact, as Montgomery conceived the campaign, there was little need for co-operation and liaison with the Seventh Army. He believed that his Eighth Army would undertake the lion's share of the fighting, movement and indeed glory on the island of Sicily. Seventh Army would be allotted the relatively passive role of guarding the flank and rear of Eighth Army, which meant there was no major perceived need for close co-ordination within Eighth Army for co-operation and liaison with Seventh Army. It was this unattractive attitude which meant that there was no lateral wireless net between the Seventh and Eighth Armies and explained the fate of the unfortunate officer sent by Eighth Army to Patton's headquarters.

Henriques later explained that: 'Monty had sent ... as a Liaison Officer, a young cavalry Captain with a bright new pip on each shoulder and white knees, no battle experience of any sort, no transport, no batman, and only a suitcase tied up with string as baggage'.<sup>42</sup> This was hardly the way to develop sound relations with Seventh Army. This officer, Captain Pulteney, had arrived straight from Britain and had not been provided with any staff, transport or communications by Eighth Army. No matter how willing Pulteney was, he could hardly be anything other than ineffective. This young officer was thus placed in a very difficult position of not being known to Patton or his staff, and having no means of properly communicating with his parent headquarters. He was new even to Eighth Army and had no knowledge or experience of Seventh Army, American methods or practice. Without transport or communications, Pulteney simply could not do his job. He had to be able to travel rapidly between the two headquarters for meetings and to be in possession of up-to-date information.

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<sup>41</sup> Kenneth Macksey, *Crucible of Power: The Fight for Tunisia, 1942-1943*, London: Hutchinson, 1969, p.261.

<sup>42</sup> 'bright new pip': this meant the officer was a newly promoted Captain. 'White knees': this was a British military slang term of the time which meant that a soldier had not been in theatre for long enough to get his knees brown from the strong Mediterranean sun, and was thus new and inexperienced.

He needed access to good communications for the same reason. In contrast, Patton had sent 'a full Colonel with two 'half tracks', a Major and a cipher detachment' for liaison work with Eighth Army Headquarters.<sup>43</sup> This was to ensure that the officer representing Patton at Eighth Army had a full scale of transport and effective communications at his disposal. Whether he would be able to make use of his lavish equipment, however, depended upon the relationship he was able to build with the commander and staff of Eighth Army. It might even be said that a liaison officer without transport and communications was a useless appendage. In sending such an officer, Montgomery was, certainly to American eyes, making an unfavourable comment about the need for liaison between the two armies. Patton's comment about Pulteney was, with shades of *Dr Strangelove*, that: 'he could not have children in his War Room'.<sup>44</sup> Finding the 'official' liaison officer unsatisfactory, Patton had sent for the officer that he knew could fulfil the role.

Henriques was the ideal candidate to act as Patton's key British liaison officer. His experience of military operations, and his skill and knowledge as a planner, were all important attributes. He understood the American Army and had already established the all-important personal relations with Patton and his staff. He also possessed an appropriate rank. All of these attributes made Robert Henriques the ideal British liaison officer to work with Seventh Army Headquarters. Patton's decision to appoint him his key British liaison officer thus made perfect sense. Henriques found himself involved there in 'rather nebulous liaison duties' for the rest of the campaign<sup>45</sup>. While Henriques knew and trusted Patton and his headquarters staff, he was a stranger to the Eighth Army. He had been appointed by Combined Operations Headquarters as a planning officer to Force 343 to assist in the planning of Operation Husky.<sup>46</sup> In that sense, his official duties ended with the invasion yet he was to play an important role throughout the rest of the campaign.

### **The Great Boundary Line Dispute**

Henriques' arrival at Seventh Army headquarters on 13 July could hardly have been more dramatic. He was a witness to one of the most controversial orders given by General Alexander in the whole campaign, indeed in the whole war. Carlo D'Este argued that

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<sup>43</sup> Henriques to Pond, URSC.

<sup>44</sup> Henriques to Pond, URSC.

<sup>45</sup> 'Sicilian Campaign', TNA.

<sup>46</sup> Force 343 was the code-name given to the American Task Force which would mount the US element of the amphibious assault on Sicily.

‘Alexander ... lit the spark for one of the most unfortunate episodes of the European war’.<sup>47</sup> Alexander and Major General Frederick Browning arrived at the headquarters while Patton was having lunch and discussed a plan for future operations which amounted to a ‘standstill’ for Patton’s army.<sup>48</sup> The Seventh Army was to halt and consolidate its positions, giving over certain roads to Eighth Army which would then make the main advance upon Catania.

It is clear that this change originated with Montgomery. On 12 July, the Eighth Army commander wrote in his personal diary that ‘the battle in Sicily required to be gripped firmly from above’ and that there was no ‘co-ordination by 15 Army Group’.<sup>49</sup> In the absence of direction and co-ordination from above, Montgomery decided to supply it himself. He signalled Alexander that he intended:

now to operate on two axes. 13 Corps on Catania and northwards. 30 Corps on CALTAGIRONE-ENNA-LEONFORTE. Suggest American Division at Comiso might now move Westwards to NISCEMI and GELA. The maintenance and transport and road situation will not allow of two Armies both carrying out extensive offensive operations. Suggest my Army operates offensively northwards to cut the island in two and that American Army holds defensively on line CALTANISSETA-CANICATTI-LICATA facing West. The available maintenance to be allocated accordingly. Once my left Corps reaches area LEONFORTE-ENNA the enemy opposing the Americans will never get away.<sup>50</sup>

Unfortunately, Alexander simply acquiesced to Montgomery’s suggestions in this telegram. This signal was the origin of Alexander’s ‘standstill order’ to Patton, and it was based on very scanty information concerning the American units. On 11 July, Montgomery had surmised, on the basis of little or no information, that: ‘the American Seventh Army is not making very great progress at present’.<sup>51</sup> At that point, American units had just been heavily counter-attacked on the Gela plain. Montgomery’s plan was to use the mobile elements of ‘Harpoon Force’ to spearhead a ‘left hook’ by XXX Corps using roads previously allocated to Seventh Army.<sup>52</sup> Montgomery’s intention was laudable; he hoped to drive XXX Corps behind the Axis units, thus encircling them. In some respects, Montgomery had simply scented the same opportunity to drive deep into Sicily that Truscott had seen in his sector.

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<sup>47</sup> D’Este, *Bitter Victory*, p.327.

<sup>48</sup> Browning was Major General Airborne Forces at Allied Forces Headquarters in Algiers.

<sup>49</sup> Montgomery Diary, 12 July 1943, LMD36/1, Montgomery Papers, Imperial War Museum London.

<sup>50</sup> Montgomery Diary, 12 July 1943, IWM.

<sup>51</sup> Montgomery Diary, 11 July 1943, IWM.

<sup>52</sup> Harpoon Force was a small mixed battlegroup of 50<sup>th</sup> RTR tanks, self-propelled artillery, medium machine guns, Anti-tank guns and infantry from the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, Devonshire Regiment, under the command of Brigadier G.W. Richards of 23<sup>rd</sup> Armoured Brigade. See Nigel Hamilton, *Monty: Master of the Battlefield 1942-1944*, Hamish Hamilton, 1983, p.303 and Lee Windsor, “‘The Eyes of All Fixed on Sicily’: Canada’s Unexpected Victory, 1943”, *Canadian Military History*, Volume 22, Number 3, Summer 2013, p.11

However, in order to clear the way for ‘Harpoon Force’, the important Highways 124 from Vizzini to Caltagirone and 117 from Caltagirone to Enna would have to be transferred to Eighth Army’s control. This meant a change in the Army boundaries agreed before the invasion in which these routes were firmly within the Seventh Army sector. It is clear that neither Alexander nor Montgomery had a clear or accurate picture of the positions of Seventh Army, nor of the disruption and delay that such changes in boundaries and plans would make. The most unfortunate aspect of Montgomery’s telegrams and Alexander’s acquiescence to them was that Montgomery was, in effect, being allowed to dictate the movements of Seventh Army by ‘remote control’.

Henriques later related the dramatic moment when Patton received these instructions:

At the moment when I arrived General Alexander was just issuing orders to General Patton to halt and consolidate his forces, thus forming a hinge on which 8<sup>th</sup> Army could advance on Catania. As part of this changed plan Patton’s 45<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division (on the right of US 7<sup>th</sup> Army) was to be withdrawn from the road up which it had advanced nearly 20 miles, surrendering it to 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Division (on the left of 8<sup>th</sup> Army). I knew General Patton intimately and could see that he was greatly upset by these orders. A British General would have been within his rights to argue, but the American custom forbids it. Very white in the face and (a trifle theatrically) standing stiffly to attention, Patton simply answered ‘Yes sir.’<sup>53</sup>

As Henriques makes clear, Alexander had not simply given an order. In discussing these changes, Alexander had used the phrase ‘I should rather like you to’ which would have acted as a prompt to a British officer that they were being invited to discuss the intent of the order.<sup>54</sup> It is likely that Alexander recognised that these orders might cause difficulty to the Seventh Army commander – which is almost certainly why Alexander had visited Patton to consult him before issuing them. Henriques suggested that: ‘any Commander, British or American, would have adopted some such course and would have meant to invite discussion and even argument or “bargaining”’. However, if this was Alexander’s intention, it was not recognised as such by Patton. The very subtle verbal cue of ‘I should rather like’ might have been recognised by a British officer but Alexander had made the mistake of not realising that this might not be interpreted in a similar way by an American officer. As Henriques rightly surmised: ‘a British General would have been within his rights to argue, but the American custom forbids it’.<sup>55</sup> Since Alexander did not ask Patton directly for his opinion, Patton did

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<sup>53</sup> Henriques to Editor, URSC.

<sup>54</sup> Robert D. Q. Henriques, *Planning*, London: War Office, 1954, held at the Joint Services Command and Staff College, Library, Shrivenham, p.56.

<sup>55</sup> Henriques to Editor, URSC.

not offer it and interpreted Alexander's tentative suggestion as a direct order. It was only later that Henriques was able to ask Patton why he had not argued his case. Patton replied that: "In my army a general is expected to obey an order and not to question it". Later he explained that the phrase "I should like" or even "I should rather like" was in American parlance taken to be a firm order; and that if a subordinate's opinion was required, he would be asked for it'.<sup>56</sup> Both men had misunderstood the other. If Alexander had wished to open a discussion on the proposed changes (and it is not entirely certain that he had), he had clearly failed; Patton's white-faced acceptance closed the matter.

Carlo D'Este claims that, as a result of his briefing by Patton, Alexander 'was fully aware that American forces were well positioned for a deep thrust to the north'.<sup>57</sup> It is clear that Alexander was not aware of this information. With the failure in radio communications, Truscott had been unable to inform Patton of his success; Henriques was the first to bring the news to Seventh Army headquarters that 3<sup>rd</sup> U.S. Division had advanced more than 30 miles north of the coast. As Alexander and Browning moved to leave Patton's headquarters.

Henriques:

tried to intervene with my news from the west and to plead its significance. Although I was known to General Alexander as a relatively junior staff officer who had served under him on various occasions, he regarded me blankly. He obviously thought I was a lunatic. He left in a hurry, but I seized General Browning by the arm and pleaded with him that my news was of the greatest importance. Surely the right course was to reinforce Truscott's success, not to halt it? But General Browning paid no more attention to me than General Alexander had done; and although I had met him on many occasions, he showed a similar lack of recognition. Shortly afterwards I got to a mirror and could not recognise myself. My face, unshaven for two days, was lavishly smeared with blood and otherwise chalk-white with the dust of Sicilian roads; and my uniform also was bloodstained, coated with white dust and in shreds.<sup>58</sup>

Alexander and Browning ignored Henriques perhaps because his intervention was unwelcome but also because he was unrecognisable. Covered in dust and blood, he was also wearing American uniform. It is clear that Patton had requested Henriques to return to Seventh Army Headquarters because he realised the need for a British interlocutor on his staff and wanted Henriques present when Alexander came to his Headquarters. Had Henriques been found and returned to Seventh Army headquarters sooner, he may have been able to brief Patton on the significance of Truscott's drive north, and help Patton prepare for Alexander's visit. Unfortunately, Henriques and his vital information had arrived too late to

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<sup>56</sup> Henriques, *Planning*.

<sup>57</sup> D'Este, *Bitter Victory*, p.327.

<sup>58</sup> Henriques to Editor, URSC.

influence Alexander's visit to Seventh Army. This was a clear case of misunderstanding brought about by a lack of familiarity and ignorance of another army which suggests that the whole episode could have been avoided had proper liaison arrangements been in place. Patton noted bitterly that Alexander had 'no Americans with him'.<sup>59</sup> Unfortunately, there had been a breakdown in relations between Alexander and Major General Clarence R. Huebner, Deputy Chief of Staff and the senior American representative at Alexander's headquarters.<sup>60</sup> During the fraught planning process for Husky, Huebner had 'felt impelled to become the protector of American interests'.<sup>61</sup> However, this had led to increasing friction and misunderstanding between Huebner and the rest of Alexander's staff. By the time of the invasion, Alexander clearly did not have confidence in Huebner and did not bring him on the visit to Seventh Army headquarters. This breakdown in relations meant that Alexander was not taking American views fully into account during this crucial period. Not surprisingly, Huebner's absence could only exacerbate the lack of understanding between Patton and Alexander.<sup>62</sup> Neither Patton nor Alexander had liaison officers that they could trust and use to explain the other's intentions at the moment it was most needed.

The U.S. Official History provides a very different interpretation of Alexander's visit to Patton's headquarters. The Official History claims that during the meeting: 'Nothing was said about any change in the boundary between the Seventh and Eighth Armies. Nothing was said about the assignment of Highway 124 to the British'.<sup>63</sup> Further, the Official History states that it was only at midnight on 13 July that Alexander's directive arrived, changing the task and boundaries of Seventh Army as well as handing the route 124 to Eighth Army.<sup>64</sup> In fact, as Henriques manuscript diary written at the time confirms, Alexander did indeed order Patton to consolidate:

I arrived at 7<sup>th</sup> Army HQ (Gela) shortly after noon. General Alexander, with Air Marshal Cunningham and General Browning were visiting the HQ. General Alexander explained his new plan, turning the U.S. advance due North on Caltanissetta and Catania, giving the Enna-Caltagirone road to 30 Corps. He issued what seemed to amount to a "standstill order" to General Patton.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Blumenson, *Patton Papers*, p.285.

<sup>60</sup> Niall Barr, *Yanks and Limeys: Alliance Warfare in the Second World War*, Jonathan Cape, 2015, p.263

<sup>61</sup> Garland and Smyth, *Sicily*, p.56

<sup>62</sup> Huebner was eventually sacked on 28 July and replaced by Brigadier General Lyman L. Lemnitzer who proved to be very adept at smoothing Anglo-American relations for Alexander throughout the Italian campaign. Huebner replaced Major General Terry Allen in command of 1<sup>st</sup> US Division. See Garland and Smyth, *Sicily*, p.347.

<sup>63</sup> Garland and Smyth, *Sicily*, p.209.

<sup>64</sup> Garland and Smyth, *Sicily*, p.209.

<sup>65</sup> Henriques Diary, 13 July, URSC.

This sense is also apparent in the diary of Major General Hobart R. Gay, Chief of Staff Seventh Army, in which he records Alexander's meeting, notes the new objectives, boundaries and the fact that the road 'ENNA, CALTAGIRONE, VIZZINI, PALAZZOLO, SIRACUSA' was to be given to the 8<sup>th</sup> Army.<sup>66</sup> Thus, Henriques memory was substantially correct and it would appear that the U.S. Official History's interpretation is mistaken. Yet since Alexander and Patton had not discussed the change in orders, it was only after Alexander left Seventh Army headquarters that the full implications became clear to Patton and his staff. Changing the army boundaries and giving up Highway 124 meant that the 45<sup>th</sup> U.S. Division would have to be displaced. This division, which had advanced over twenty miles from the beachhead, and had already dumped its ammunition and supplies along the route to facilitate further advance, would have to retrace its steps almost all the way back to the beachhead.<sup>67</sup> Just as Patton had not negotiated with Alexander over his orders, he then issued orders to General Omar Bradley, commander of U.S. II Corps, without any possibility of negotiation.<sup>68</sup> Bradley later reflected that these orders made him 'very peeved' and that he:

wondered if I received such orders now, would I really obey them? They were so obviously wrong and impractical. We should have been able to use that road, even if we would have shifted to the left – used it to move to the left.<sup>69</sup>

The lack of discussion over the details of the orders in Alexander's presence had led to this highly frustrating and unnecessary situation. Just as importantly, in limiting any advance by Seventh Army, Alexander had forbidden any exploitation by Truscott's division.

Henriques would always maintain that had Truscott's drive been supported rather than cancelled by Alexander, Sicily could have been captured in five days rather than thirty eight.<sup>70</sup> While this remains speculation, there is no doubt that Alexander's orders halted the one American formation which had little, if any, opposition to its front and curtailed what had been a highly successful exploitation from the beachheads. In the event, 'Harpoon Force' and XXX Corps were not able to make the progress expected by Montgomery. That the fleeing opportunity was missed was perhaps understandable but the change in Army boundaries cost Seventh Army dearly. Alexander's order proved highly frustrating and wasteful in that the 45<sup>th</sup> U.S. Division, which had been making good progress, had to retrace

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<sup>66</sup> Hobart R. Gay Diary, 13 July 1943, Box 2, Hobart R Gay Papers, USAMHI.

<sup>67</sup> Henriques, *Planning*, p.104.

<sup>68</sup> D'Este, *Bitter Victory*, p.330.

<sup>69</sup> quoted in D'Este, *Bitter Victory*, p.331.

<sup>70</sup> Henriques to Pond, URSC.



its route back to the beachhead. Alexander's intervention at this crucial moment in the campaign had also done significant damage to Anglo-Americans relations. In giving Seventh Army a passive role just at the point that a successful exploitation was being carried out, Alexander had convinced Patton that his army was not being given a fair chance to prove itself in the campaign.

Alexander's orders halted the most mobile elements in the Allied army. Alexander admitted to Brooke that, in Eighth Army, 'Lack of M[otor]T[ransport] has prevented the lifting of infantry who have had to march and fight under conditions of great heat'.<sup>71</sup> Eighth Army had combat loaded its units for the invasion of Sicily as it was expected that there would be severe resistance as soon as the forces landed. This limited the allocation of transport and prioritised ammunition and other stores. In addition, losses to convoys in transit as well as during the invasion created a severe shortage of transport.<sup>72</sup> While the movements of Eighth Army suffered from this dearth, Seventh Army was lavishly provided with transport, and, as Truscott's drive had proved, were highly mobile. As Henriques explained to Lieutenant General John Lucas:

the British High Command has no clear conception of the power and mobility of the American Seventh Army. The British vehicles are so inferior to the American that neither commander nor staff understand what can be accomplished by good equipment. He says American infantry can cover more ground than any of the British except the best Guard Regiments.<sup>73</sup>

Alexander's decisions had been based on a fundamental misappreciation of the capabilities of American units. It is clear that neither Alexander nor Montgomery had a clear or accurate picture of the advance of Seventh Army or the nature of the opposition facing it. It was thus a fundamental failure of co-ordination and liaison, combined with Montgomery's command by 'remote control', which placed a brake upon Seventh Army at just the point when it might have shattered the Axis defence of the island.

The next day, Alexander informed General Alan Brooke, C.I.G.S., of the progress of the campaign. He remarked that: 'I spent all yesterday with American Seventh Army at Gela. They have done well and are in good heart and show lots of enterprise'.<sup>74</sup> However, he

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<sup>71</sup> Alexander to Brooke, 14 July 1943, 6/2/18, Alanbrooke papers, LHCMA.

<sup>72</sup> 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Division lost three ships to U-Boat attack in its slow assault convoy. This resulted in the loss of over 500 vehicles, including the loss of almost all the vehicles and signals equipment of the divisional headquarters. Nicholson, *Canadians in Italy*, pp.45-46. The 50<sup>th</sup> Division lost all of its divisional transport to aerial attack during the amphibious assault. Molony???

<sup>73</sup> Lucas Diary, 15 July 1943, Box 1, John P. Lucas Papers, US Army Military History Institute, Carlisle, PA, hereafter Lucas papers, USAMHI. While Lucas identifies this 'British Officer' as 'E-----', it is clear that this is Henriques. It is more than likely that Lucas misheard his name as 'Enriques'.

<sup>74</sup> Alexander to Brooke, 14 July 1943, LHCMA.

gave no indication that he understood how his orders had been received or the consternation they had created in Seventh Army headquarters. He outlined the development of the campaign:

Present intention as follows. 13 Corps to thrust towards Catania to seize the port and airfields at Gerbini. 30 Corps directed on network of road communications at Enna. US Seventh Army to pivot on Licata and secure general line Caltanissetta-Canicatti future operations will then envisage thrust towards Messina from Catania by 13 Corps. 30 Corps drive to north coast at St Stephane then turning east to join up with 13 Corps at Messina. When the island is split in two from north to south American Seventh Army will be directed towards Palermo and Trapani.<sup>75</sup>

Given that Trapani was on the westernmost tip of the island, it is clear that Alexander intended the Seventh Army to 'mop up' western Sicily while Eighth Army drove on Messina.

Alexander's 'standstill' order ultimately had a number of unintended consequences. Patton's seemingly supine acceptance of Alexander's directive on 13 July also led to a reaction in the headquarters of Seventh Army. Henriques explained to the Major General John Lucas, and no doubt to Patton himself, that:

General Alexander does not understand that a wish expressed to General Patton is taken as an order which it is a point of honor to obey. This is not true among his own people where commanders feel themselves privileged to argue the point.<sup>76</sup>

Henriques knew that, particularly at senior level, any order given within the British Army was open to what he later referred to as 'negotiation'.<sup>77</sup> Henriques was suggesting, as tactfully as possible, that Patton could, and should, have argued with Alexander over the nature of his directive on 13 July. In doing so, Henriques was explaining one army's culture to another while also supporting Patton in having the directive overturned. Henriques subtle prompting on this point undoubtedly bore fruit. On 21 July, Generals Huebner and Gay discussed the principle that:

that the Commanding General of the 7<sup>th</sup> Army must realise and must enforce the principle that he as an Army Commander did not receive orders, but an Army Commander receives letters of direction outlining missions, and that he, the Army Commander, is the sole judge as to how these missions are accomplished.<sup>78</sup>

Neither Patton nor his staff would tolerate being given such constraining orders without argument again. Patton had undoubtedly been shocked and upset by Alexander's directive on

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<sup>75</sup> Alexander to Brooke, 14 July 1943, LHCMA.

<sup>76</sup> Lucas Diary, 15 July 1943, USAMHI.

<sup>77</sup> Henriques, *Planning*.

<sup>78</sup> Gay Diary, 21 July 1943, USAMHI.

13 July but the lesson had been learned. No American general would ever accept a British order quite so uncritically again.

Convinced that the passive, defensive task assigned by Alexander to the Seventh Army was ‘incompatible with American participation in the HUSKY effort’, Patton, accompanied by Major General Albert C. Wedemeyer, a U.S. War Department observer, visited Alexander’s headquarters in Algiers on 17 July. They met with Alexander and ‘courteously and tactfully’ presented their point of view on three maps which had been made up depicting Patton’s vision of future operations for the Seventh Army.<sup>79</sup> Patton argued that he should be given permission to drive into the west of Sicily and that such ‘aggressive action on the part of the Seventh Army would provide incidental but effective security for the rear of the British Eighth Army’.<sup>80</sup> Denied the freedom to push north, Patton had decided to go west and Alexander grudgingly accepted. Agrigento ‘represented the gateway to western Sicily’, and the town was easily captured by Truscott’s division on 16 July.<sup>81</sup> Its capture marked the origins of Patton’s drive upon Palermo but it also ensured that the two Allied armies would not drive northwards together. The time that had passed between Alexander’s visit to Seventh Army on 13 July and Patton’s visit to Algiers on 17 July represented a crucial missed opportunity in the campaign. Ultimately, this missed opportunity had occurred due to Alexander’s lack of vision for the campaign and Montgomery’s attempt to command the Seventh Army by ‘remote control’ through 15<sup>th</sup> Army Group Headquarters.

### **Henriques Predicament as an Unofficial Liaison Officer**

On 14 July, at Patton’s request, both Henriques and Pulteney visited Eighth Army Headquarters, met with Montgomery and returned to Gela with a message for Patton. This journey took the two liaison officers four hours each way.<sup>82</sup> Finally, four days into the campaign some liaison was being established between the two Army headquarters. However, Henriques found himself in an awkward predicament. Denied his own transport by General Gay, Henriques considered that:

I was quite useless under these conditions and that my presence was, in fact, positively harmful. Liaison, in the proper sense, was non-existent. General Patton wanted me to remain; and the fact that I was there tended to give him and his staff a comfortable sense that they were in touch with the British view. This

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<sup>79</sup> Observer Report, 24 August 1943, A.C. Wedemeyer Files, Box 123, Eisenhower Pre-Presidential Files, Eisenhower Library, Abilene, Kansas.

<sup>80</sup> Observer Report, EL.

<sup>81</sup> Garland and Smyth, *Sicily*, p.226.

<sup>82</sup> Henriques Diary, 14 July 1943, Box 92, Henriques papers, URSC.

was a dangerous misconception; and furthermore, it undermined Pulteney's position. Since I knew General Patton well, and was on terms of pleasant friendship with most of his staff, Pulteney was virtually ignored at the H.Q.<sup>83</sup>

Henriques position within the Headquarters simply underlined the importance of good personal relationships in making liaison work but he was painfully aware that his presence actually made it difficult for Captain Pulteney to begin to make those personal connections. At the same time, lacking transport and communications, Henriques could not actually fulfil the functions of a liaison officer. Since an officer was meant to be provided with transport and communications by his own headquarters, there was none spare for Henriques. He understood the situation and the American attitude that assumed 'an officer would arrive properly equipped for his job'.<sup>84</sup> His presence at the Headquarters might reassure the American staff but it was a dangerous illusion. Faced with this dilemma, Henriques went so far as to signal Combined Operations Headquarters requesting an immediate return to the UK but this, predictably, elicited no useful response while he was on the island.<sup>85</sup>

Henriques had to borrow a truck from the British Liaison Section, 12<sup>th</sup> Air Support Command in order to drive to 8<sup>th</sup> Army Headquarters. Henriques and Pulteney were able to convince Major General Freddie De Guingand, Chief of Staff of the Eighth Army, of the problems of liaison with Seventh Army and a 'very decrepit jeep and a driver' were procured for Pulteney – but not for Henriques.<sup>86</sup> Nonetheless, with this limited transport, Henriques and Pulteney together were able to start the work of liaison between Allied units – nine days after the landings had already taken place.

If there had been at least a limited, if ineffective, attempt to establish liaison between the Seventh and Eighth Armies, the same could not be said of the corps and divisional headquarters operating below them. The void in co-ordination and co-operation which existed at Army Group and Army level was simply repeated down through the chain of command. Henriques became instrumental in facilitating contact and eventually establishing liaison between Major General Omar Bradley's U.S. II Corps and Lieutenant General Oliver Leese's XXX Corps over the course of a few days in late July.

### **Henriques and Corps Liaison**

With the Germans and Italians now withdrawing, U.S. II Corps had begun to push north towards Enna. At the same time, the 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Division, part of XXX Corps, had

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<sup>83</sup> Henriques Diary, 15-17 July 1943, URSC.

<sup>84</sup> Henriques Diary, 15-17 July 1943, URSC.

<sup>85</sup> Henriques Diary, 15-17 July 1943, URSC.

<sup>86</sup> Henriques Diary, 15-17 July 1943, URSC.

been ordered to conduct a 'left hook' using roads released by the 45<sup>th</sup> U.S. Division. This saw the Canadians pushing towards Enna from the west, while the 1<sup>st</sup> U.S. Division closed on the town from the south. Without proper liaison, this presented a looming problem of co-ordination between the two formations. It is not surprising that such a breakdown occurred between the two formations. The 45<sup>th</sup> U.S. Division had been on the right flank of U.S. II Corps and had made contact with the 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Division. However, when the 45<sup>th</sup> Division had had to retrace its steps back to the coast, the 1<sup>st</sup> U.S. Division became the right flank of U.S. II Corps and thus 'responsible for maintaining contact with the British on the right'.<sup>87</sup> Even in the best of circumstances, given these changes, it would have taken time to re-establish liaison and communication between the two formations. In fact, Henriques discovered that there was 'a total lack of liaison between the Canadians and General Bradley's US 2<sup>nd</sup> Corps'.<sup>88</sup> Again, Henriques' personal testimony contradicts the U.S. Official History which states that U.S. II Corps 'had been tied in tightly with the 30 Corps since 11 July' which was far from the case in reality.<sup>89</sup> On 19 July, Henriques and Pulteney were able to visit the headquarters of the 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Division only to discover that they 'had had no contact with U.S. 2 Corps all that day'.<sup>90</sup> The two liaison officers returned to Seventh Army and reported to U.S. II Corps on Canadian plans. Henriques noted that: 'Relationships with 2 Corps are not easy. There was considerable doubt about who was to capture ENNA and 2 Corps sounded annoyed with the British'.<sup>91</sup>

Once again, these problems had been exacerbated by the lack of proper provision for liaison. While the 1<sup>st</sup> U.S. Division had sent a liaison team complete with transport and communications to 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Division, the Canadians had not sent an equivalent officer. Henriques found, in a now familiar story, that the Canadians: 'had no spare transport and had previously had to send their L.O. in a 3 tonner'.<sup>92</sup> At the same time, it would appear that U.S. 1<sup>st</sup> Division had not been keeping U.S. II Corps 'fully in touch with the situation'.<sup>93</sup>

With such problems in liaison, it was entirely understandable that misunderstandings arose due to a lack of information and communication. On the evening of 19 July, General Bradley, commander of U.S. II Corps, learned that XXX Corps had turned east towards

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<sup>87</sup> Garland and Smyth, *Sicily*, p.231.

<sup>88</sup> Henriques to Editor, URSC.

<sup>89</sup> Garland and Smyth, *Sicily*, p.249.

<sup>90</sup> Henriques Diary, 15 July-19 July 1943, URSC.

<sup>91</sup> Henriques Diary 19 July 1943, URSC.

<sup>92</sup> Henriques Diary 19 July 1943, URSC. As previously noted, the 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Division had lost almost all the vehicles and signals equipment of the divisional headquarters. Nicholson, *Canadians in Italy*, pp.45-46.

<sup>93</sup> Henriques Diary 19 July 1943, URSC.

Adrano. This would mean that the Canadians would by-pass Enna and leave an enemy ‘pocket’ between the two towns. He was so exercised by this news that he wrote a memo to Patton stating that he considered ‘that this change of plans and change in direction without notifying the II Corps leaves a dangerous gap between the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> Armies which may prove serious. The tactical plan for II Corps was based upon reasonable protection of the right flank by the XXX British Corps’.<sup>94</sup> Bradley had also received an intelligence report that 60 Axis tanks were moving towards Enna. He proposed to halt all U.S. II Corps movement until the situation was cleared up. This memo thus formed ‘a matter of record and as a protest to the change of plan of the adjacent unit without notifying II Corps’.<sup>95</sup> Given the seriousness with which Bradley viewed the situation, it is little wonder that Henriques noted that ‘2 Corps sounded annoyed with the British’.<sup>96</sup>

Henriques was instrumental in clearing up this confusion over the next day. Henriques discovered that Bradley had requested air support to attack the area north east of Enna – which he believed harboured enemy tanks but which would actually have hit the advancing Canadians. Henriques was able to inform 12<sup>th</sup> Air Support Command of the Canadian positions in time to avert a serious friendly fire incident. When Bradley’s memorandum arrived at Seventh Army headquarters, Henriques told ‘Patton that General Bradley was misinformed – which General Patton had assumed – and stated frankly that I had expected some sort of misunderstanding like this to arise and that it was entirely due to a lack of transport’.<sup>97</sup> Henriques then emphasised his unofficial role and that without transport he ‘was quite impotent to help under existing conditions’.<sup>98</sup> This finally had the effect of getting Henriques the transport he needed. He travelled with Colonel Maddox, G.3 of Seventh Army to U.S. II Corps and then on to the Canadian Division where he met with Lieutenant General Guy Simonds who promised to send a liaison officer to U.S. 1<sup>st</sup> Infantry Division the next day and visit General Bradley. Henriques then got back to Seventh Army headquarters after dark, relaying his news to the war room and then spent three hours in conversation with Patton which gave him ‘a very clear picture of General Patton’s views, ideas and intentions’.<sup>99</sup>

On 20 July, the problems of liaison between U.S. II and XXX Corps were finally resolved. Freddie de Guingand, Chief of Staff of Eighth Army, no doubt informed by Henriques and Pulteney of the parlous state of liaison between U.S. II Corps and XXX Corps,

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<sup>94</sup> Gay Diary, 19 July 1943, USAMHI.

<sup>95</sup> Gay Diary, 19 July 1943, USAMHI.

<sup>96</sup> Henriques Diary 19 July 1943, URSC.

<sup>97</sup> Henriques Diary 19 July 1943, URSC.

<sup>98</sup> Henriques Diary 19 July 1943, URSC.

<sup>99</sup> Henriques Diary 19 July 1943, URSC.

asked General Oliver Leese if he ‘could do anything to help’.<sup>100</sup> Leese had written to Bradley and also arranged a visit to U.S. II Corps headquarters. Bradley, who had been furious, was ‘now perfectly satisfied’.<sup>101</sup> Henriques visited the Canadian Division and then accompanied Leese on his visit to Bradley’s headquarters. Henriques explained the situation regarding liaison to Leese on the way. Major Chester Hansen, Bradley’s A.D.C., noted that Leese: ‘called on the General today, and to surprise him we prepared tea. Now we are frightened that the 1<sup>st</sup> Division may learn of our tea party and brand us for it. The interlude however was thoroughly enjoyable and we all enjoyed it immensely’.<sup>102</sup> Leese then went on to visit Seventh Army headquarters that night where everyone ‘drank champagne with General Patton’.<sup>103</sup> In effect, Leese had acted as a high level liaison officer and begun to establish personal relationships between British and American commanders. The relatively jovial Leese had proved far more adept at smoothing over Anglo-American relations than his acerbic master, Montgomery. That it took a Corps commander to smooth over some of the feathers that had been ruffled, simply demonstrated the absence of liaison and co-ordination that had existed earlier in the campaign.

When Leese left Seventh Army the next morning he told Henriques that he had had a most successful visit but also advised Henriques to ‘stay with General Patton and promised to put my position right with 8<sup>th</sup> Army; also to convey to General Alexander some of the views on the question of “Anglo-American relationships”’.<sup>104</sup> In many respects, once Leese had visited U.S. II Corps and Seventh Army in what were cordial visits and liaison organised between the respective Allied units, much of Henriques unofficial job had been done. Patton had ordered his presence at Seventh Army headquarters because he had realised that there was *no* effective liaison being conducted. That problem had now been solved – twelve days into the campaign. This state of affairs reflects poorly on many of the main Allied commanders of the Sicily campaign. It seems extraordinary that the Allied armies could have embarked on such a major campaign without giving sufficient thought to proper liaison. It is little wonder, given this situation that there were so many misunderstandings and arguments. Nonetheless, it was highly unfortunate that it took the force of circumstances during the campaign, and the intervention of an unofficial liaison officer to enable this. It hardly needs

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<sup>100</sup> Leese unpublished memoirs, Oliver Leese papers, IWM.

<sup>101</sup> Henriques Diary, 22 July 1943, URSC.

<sup>102</sup> Chester B. Hansen Diary, 21 July 1943, Box 4, Chester B. Hansen Papers, USMHI.

<sup>103</sup> Henriques Diary, 22 July 1943, URSC.

<sup>104</sup> Henriques Diary, 22 July 1943, URSC.

to be said that the Allied campaign in Sicily would have run more smoothly had more emphasis been placed on liaison from the outset.

### **Operation ‘Pip’**

By late July 1943, the Axis defence had shortened its line around the north of the island and was now seeking impose the maximum delay on the Allies in order to enable the evacuation of the island. On 31 July, units of the 1<sup>st</sup> U.S. Infantry Division had stumbled into fierce fighting for the hill-top town of Troina. Seventh Army intelligence had failed to appreciate that Troina was strongly held, and the fight for the town became a week-long battle and one of the most intense of the campaign.<sup>105</sup> Seventh Army headquarters was thus understandably anxious to gain as much intelligence as possible on any possible Axis defensive lines which might bar the way towards Messina.

It was in this context that there was an important coda to Henriques’ contribution to Seventh Army which provides a rare glimpse into the operations of British special forces during the Sicilian campaign. In his diary he noted that on 30 July 1943 at ‘About 1700 hours met Phillip in the street, unshaven, ragged clothes, boots in bits. Re-clothed him and took him to dinner’.<sup>106</sup> This rather cryptic entry refers to a chance meeting with Captain Phillip Pinckney of 2<sup>nd</sup> Special Air Service (2 SAS). In fact, Henriques knew this officer well as Pinckney had succeeded him in command of E Troop, No.12 Commando. Pinckney had served in numerous commando raids during 1941 and 1942 and had then transferred to 2 SAS in 1943.<sup>107</sup> He had parachuted into Sicily prior to the invasion and had completed his mission behind the Axis lines before bumping into Henriques in Palermo. The next day, Pinckney took Henriques to his:

“mountain depot” at Castelnova. He and 9 men had been dropped at 6,000 ft on Mt. S. Salvatore. He had spotted for 15 days, against the coast road, cutting telephone wires etc. ultimately had got through to 45 Div. One signaller missing otherwise all his party safe.<sup>108</sup>

Pinckney and his team had been engaged on a deep reconnaissance mission, a specialty of British special forces during the Second World War.

Now, through Henriques auspices, Pinckney was sent on a new mission to help reconnoitre the terrain in the Nebrodi Mountains for the Seventh Army. Another SAS team had gathered intelligence that the Germans had prepared further defensive positions behind

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<sup>105</sup> Garland and Smyth, *Sicily*, pp.324-325.

<sup>106</sup> Henriques Diary, 30 July 1943, URSC.

<sup>107</sup> See Pinckney’s biography at: <http://www.commandoveterans.org/PhilipHughPinckney12Commando>

<sup>108</sup> Henriques Diary, 31 July 1943, URSC.



Troina but Seventh Army had little information about them. As U.S. II Corps wanted a further reconnaissance to confirm this intelligence, it was decided that Pinckney would undertake the mission. Pinckney was to 'recce NW of Randazzo, if he found nothing, light a signal fire on M. die Tre Santi and proceed Eastwards. If he found prepared positions, he was to return and report on them'.<sup>109</sup> Henriques considered that: 'The mission is clearly very important as II Corps are making very heavy weather of their advance and it is possible that there is very little in front of them'.<sup>110</sup> He also noted that: 'Phillip [was] most anxious to undertake this recce – since II Corps had no one qualified to go - and wished to go alone'.<sup>111</sup> At this stage of the war, the Seventh Army lacked the capability to mount the type of operations which were undertaken by British special forces. This decision led to an interesting conundrum as to who actually had the authority to order an SAS officer to mount such a mission. Ultimately, it was decided that Henriques, as the senior British officer with Patton's Headquarters and a representative of Combined Operations Headquarters, could order Operation 'Pip'. After a two day reconnaissance in the area and numerous close shaves with German troops, Pinckney was able to confirm in a report to U.S. II Corps that the 'Germans have got a defensive line along CESARO-SAN FRATELLO road. To the north it appears as a semicircle backed up by artillery surrounding SAN FRATELLO'.<sup>112</sup> Henriques' belief that U.S. II Corps might have little opposition in front of them had proved unfounded. This reconnaissance confirmed that the Germans had indeed prepared another line of defence. In fact the defences that ran between San Fratello and Cesaro had been christened the new 'Hube Line' and they had been designed as a major defensive line to delay the Seventh Army's drive along the north coast. Tragically, this was Pinckney's last successful mission. Just a few days later, on 7 September 1943, Pinckney parachuted into northern Italy with an SAS team but he was captured and executed by German forces.<sup>113</sup> Operation 'Pip' may well have been a very small mission but it had important consequences. U.S. II Corps was made aware of important German defences through the activities of two British officers. It may even be that the intelligence gained from Pinckney's reconnaissance influenced Patton's decision to launch an amphibious 'end-run' at Sant'Agata on 7-8 August, which outflanked the San Fratello line. As part of the link-up, troops of the 9<sup>th</sup> U.S. Division took Cesaro on 8

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<sup>109</sup> Henriques Diary, 1 August 1943, URSC.

<sup>110</sup> Henriques Diary, 1 August 1943, URSC.

<sup>111</sup> Henriques Diary, 1 August 1943, URSC.

<sup>112</sup> Operation 'Pip', Box 93, Henriques Papers, URSC

<sup>113</sup> See Pinckney's biography at: <http://www.commandoveterans.org/PhilipHughPinckney12Commando>

August.<sup>114</sup> It was only due to Henriques personal experience and service with British special forces that Pinckney had been available for the mission in the first place. This very small special forces operation also demonstrates that while a great deal of friction had been generated between the British and American high commands on Sicily, this did not preclude effective low-level liaison and co-operation.

### **Henriques on Sicily**

Operation 'Pip' represented Henriques' last major contribution to the Sicily campaign which was now reaching its final stages. The Axis forces conducted a successful evacuation of the island while Seventh Army patrols entered Messina before the British on 17 August 1943.<sup>115</sup> Throughout July and August 1943, Henriques had gone 'above and beyond' the simple role of a liaison officer. He had travelled over 10,000 miles on the island conducting liaison visits but this represented only part of his contribution.<sup>116</sup> In working with Patton, Henriques had helped to explain the British to the Americans and vice versa, had helped to establish understanding between Leese and Bradley and, through Operation 'Pip', been involved in long range reconnaissance and intelligence gathering on the island. Of course, Henriques undoubted contribution was only possible due to the severe deficiencies in liaison at the outset of the campaign. Once back in England, Henriques wrote a detailed report for Combined Operations HQ on the Sicily operation. His final reflections on liaison during the Sicilian campaign are worth noting:

I was, however, convinced that the question of inter-allied liaison on a high level is a very real problem requiring much prior thought and action. Officers employed on such duties must be qualified by ample operational experience, should already have the confidence of one Army Commander, and should be capable of rapidly gaining the confidence of the other. It is felt, therefore, that they should be rather more senior than those usually selected for this work.<sup>117</sup>

Having witnessed such little emphasis being placed upon liaison, and the myriad problems that resulted from this, Henriques was recommending that more senior officers were required to be effective in this important role. Henriques had certainly gained the confidence of General Patton, if not Montgomery, and this had been highly important in his work of ensuring that the British and American formations could co-operate with each other. Yet Henriques personal connection and friendship with Patton may have proved double-edged. Personal connections could advance a career but also limit them if the star to which they were

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<sup>114</sup> Smyth and Garland, Sicily, p.374.

<sup>115</sup> Smyth and Garland, p.416.

<sup>116</sup> 'Sicilian Campaign', TNA.

<sup>117</sup> 'Sicilian Campaign', TNA.

attached subsequently dimmed. Patton's role and career became uncertain after the two recorded 'slapping' incidents in field hospitals in Sicily. With Patton under a cloud, it was General Omar Bradley who was sent to the U.K. to take charge of the American Army's part of Operation Overlord. Since there was little or no personal connection between Bradley and Henriques, it is unsurprising that Henriques was not requested as an advisor for U.S. First Army Headquarters in the build-up to D-Day. Henriques returned to Combined Operations Headquarters but his active part in the war was now at an end. In fact, it would appear that Henriques should have been allowed to continue working with U.S. forces for the invasion of Europe. General Charles Gerhardt, the former commander of the U.S. 29<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division, wrote to Henriques in 1965:

It has been a long time since we discussed the techniques of landing on a hostile shore when you visited me at the HQ 29 Div, Tavistock. ... the planners did not use your experience. We went in overloaded, and were put in the water too far at sea. Lost all our artillery in DUKWs. These sank as did most of the DD tanks.<sup>118</sup>

The problems that afflicted the 29<sup>th</sup> Division on 6 June 1944 are well known but it does seem unfortunate that Henriques' experience in combined planning was not put to the same use in 1944 as it had been with JOSS Force in 1943.

### **Henriques and Planning**

After the war, and no doubt as a result of his experience as a planner and his literary talents, Henriques was commissioned by the War Office to research and write a monograph on 'Planning' as part of a series of studies of various aspects of the Second World War.<sup>119</sup> Henriques laboured for a number of years on the work and it remains one of the most useful accounts of the machinery, structures and processes of British staff planning during the Second World War. With full access to official documents, Henriques used the planning of Operation Husky as a case study of how the machinery worked in practice. Unfortunately, it was decided by the War Office that the monograph contained highly secret and sensitive information and its distribution was strictly limited.<sup>120</sup> Other volumes in the series, on

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<sup>118</sup> Charles Gerhardt to Robert Henriques, 14 January 1965, Box 98, Henriques papers, URSC.

<sup>119</sup> See Henriques, *Planning*.

<sup>120</sup> Henriques' monograph was roneoed, not printed, and its distribution limited to the War Office, the National Defence College and Army Staff College. To this author's knowledge, only three copies of the monograph remain; one at the National Archives of the U.K., Kew, and five at the Joint Services Command and Staff College Library, Shrivenham. Henriques was not even allowed to keep a copy; see Robert Henriques to Jack Lambert, 15 November 1962, Box 115, Henriques papers URSC, and correspondence with Christopher Soames, Box 94, Henriques papers, URSC.

subjects such as transport, maintenance and supply, were printed and widely distributed around the army.<sup>121</sup>

Henriques remained frustrated by its limited distribution and even sought permission from Christopher Soames, Secretary of State for War, to quote from the monograph in order to 'correct with authority the totally false impression' of the planning for Operation Husky given in Field Marshal Montgomery's *Memoirs*.<sup>122</sup> Henriques claimed that Montgomery's account was 'supported by an unfair selection of documents and even, in at least one case, by an alteration of the text'.<sup>123</sup> Henriques plea to use material from his monograph was motivated by his distress at the 'harm done to Anglo-American relations by some of these books. I served in three campaigns with the American Army ... and I should dearly like the chance to repair the damage done by my former superior officers'.<sup>124</sup> Perhaps not surprisingly, given that any entry into print by Henriques may have resulted in a public challenge of the veracity of Montgomery's *Memoirs* which were already controversial and causing numerous difficulties, Christopher Soames did not agree to the request. Henriques continued his career as a writer and published a series of novels, two autobiographies and some well-regarded non-fiction but never quite achieved the success that his first novel had promised.

### **Conclusion**

This account of a relatively junior officer's experience within the Sicily campaign has emphasised the importance of liaison, and the lack of it, to the conduct and development of the Allied campaign on Sicily in July and August 1943. While Henriques role can only ever be considered a small fragment of a much wider story, his experience helps to place a few vital pieces into the wider kaleidoscope of these events. Henriques had certainly matched the job description for high-level inter-Allied liaison work. In many respects, he was uniquely suited to the task in Operation Husky and he fulfilled it admirably. Henriques varied experiences during the Sicilian campaign of 1943 reinforce not only the importance of liaison to military headquarters but also demonstrate how the lack of proper liaison at the outset of this campaign served to exacerbate the existing misunderstandings, tensions and rivalries between British and American forces. It is clear that neither army had properly considered the importance for well-established liaison before the campaign. The Eighth Army, in

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<sup>121</sup> See, for example, J. A. H. Carter and D. N. Kann. *Maintenance in the Field. Volume I: 1939-1942*, London: The War Office, 1952.

<sup>122</sup> See Bernard L. Montgomery, *The Memoirs of Field Marshal the Viscount Montgomery*, London: Collins, 1958, p.175-176.

<sup>123</sup> Robert Henriques to Christopher Soames, 2 December 1958, Box 94, Henriques papers, URSC.

<sup>124</sup> Henriques to Soames, URSC.

particular, had simply not given enough thought to the matter of liaison. Montgomery wrote a detailed summary of ‘Some Reflections on the Campaign in Sicily July/August 1943’ which contained a good deal of analysis and lessons learned concerning the campaign.<sup>125</sup> However, these voluminous notes made virtually no mention of the Seventh Army or the importance of co-ordination with Allied forces. Even at the end of the Sicily campaign, it is clear that Montgomery had not fully recognised the need to take greater account of working with allies.

This situation was only made worse by the absence of an Army Group Headquarters on the island for much of the campaign. The Allies had simply not invested sufficiently in command, control, co-ordination and liaison. The dearth of liaison and co-ordination caused delay in Allied movements and gave the Axis forces valuable time to recover and develop their defence. While there were many reasons for mistrust and suspicion between the two armies, greater attention to efficient liaison and co-ordination before the operation began would have smoothed the Allies path in Sicily and may have prevented some of the more egregious errors and misunderstandings that developed. This should have enabled the allies to capitalise upon the undoubted surprise achieved by making successful landings on the island and brought the campaign to a successful conclusion more rapidly. As it was, Robert Henriques, in acting as Patton’s unofficial liaison officer, played an unsung yet important part in the Allies conquest of Sicily by filling the void in liaison and co-ordination that, arguably, should not have existed in the first place.

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<sup>125</sup> Montgomery Diary, 5 August 1943, IWM.